

The Creative Impulse



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We dedicate this issue

to Acting President William F. O'Neil.

He came to us in an emergency
situation when our creative
impulses were waning.

He set about reordering our
environment and priorities.

The following poetry and prose
by students of the
Massachusetts College of Art
attest to his nurturing
of our creative impulse.

Lila Chalpin

Professor of Literature and Film

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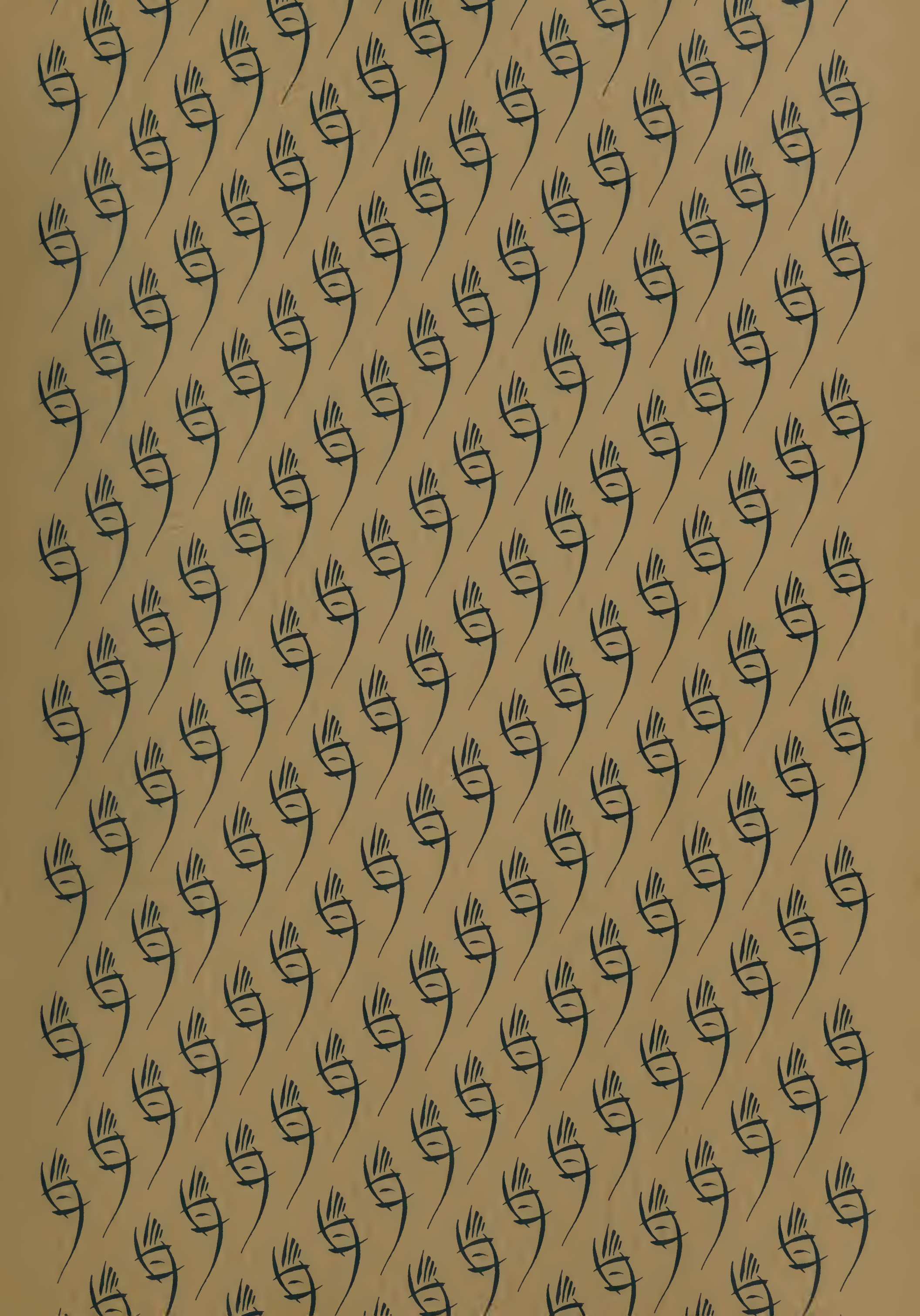
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Contents

	Page
Rummy	<i>Scot Carter</i> 5
Green	<i>Carolyn Piszcz</i> 6
I Dream	<i>Patti Babineau</i> 7
Holiday Cards	<i>Alejandro Vallega</i> 7
Motel	<i>Victoria Pearmain</i> 8
Rubens’ Portrait of Thomas Howard	<i>Melissa Spinoso</i> 10
Diaries	<i>Jeanne Kent</i> 11
Twyla	<i>Carla Johnson</i> 12
To Christo	<i>Brian Lane</i> 15
Easterhouse, two different trains from the center of Glasgow	<i>Katie Redmond</i> 16
George Segal: The Holocaust	<i>Linda Roffman</i> 17
Haiku	<i>Lynn Packish</i> 17
Unique Forms of Continuity in Space	<i>Laya Steinberg</i> 18
Untitled	<i>Jane Janorsky</i> 19
Static	<i>Jonathan Banchick</i> 20
M.M.	<i>Brenda Brenner</i> 22
Celebration	<i>Joe Daniels</i> 22
Hair	<i>Frances Francis</i> 23
Untitled	<i>Lynn Wallace</i> 24
Autobiographical Poem	<i>Tanya Allen</i> 25
Changes	<i>Jeanne Kent</i> 26



Rummy

Cream whirlpooled to the bottom as our unmatched spoons sang
to the walls of our cups.
I never could tell you, cup after cup, how much I hated coffee.
Your red metal table wore the scattered deck
cards, with naked cherubs on pogo sticks, worn and black from use.
The Jack, Queen, and King of Hearts undressed your hand.
“I am out,” you would say, your suits matched.
Your thin ringed fingers knocked sharp and quick upon your table.
The tight wrinkles around your mouth gathered to form a smile.
Our laughter would drown out the hum of your kitchen clock.
Before the next shuffle. Two pieces of finnish coffee bread.

You and I, the only ones on the lake, the youngest and the oldest
playing our game.
The stories of Toholampi and the days before my birth
the lifetime you revealed card upon card.

The smoke of dawn, unclothed the lake’s smooth skin, each summer morning
until the September leaves fell on your lake.
Our leftover coffee bread always rolled tight, in tinfoil
protected from the dampness in your breadbox stove
 That’s where I found your last piece
 Your suits all matched
Alone, you turned over the card that woke me from my sleep.
 I turned over and over miles away.
 You rose high
 Above the grandmother you revealed
 Above the friend you had become
 Above that damn coffee
 and those unmatched cards of yesterday
 you placed in my hand today.

Scot Carter



Green

the slice of a lime
in an icy clear drink.
the layer of scum on
a stagnant pond.
a crispy bowl of lettuce
freshly planted seedlings
fresh grass cutting
a cool shower on a spring
morning.
a newborn leaf
pasty guacamole dip
the kneestains on a 4 year old
kid
weathered copper
brand new white sneakers after
a day in the park.
pine boughs peaking through
the snow.
a moustache of pistachio
ice cream.

Carolyn Piszcz



I Dream

eyes like evil flashlights
peer through lion-colored grasses

a mirage of floating boulders
at the foot of Kilimanjaro

terracotta people
wrapped in bright patterns

herding past the psychic forest
where the wildthings are.

Patti Babineau

Holiday cards:

1.
Under the canvas surface
Blue glass hardens

Brushes bite

Truth

2.
heArt
heaRt
hearT

Alejandro Vallega





Motel

Sandy lay shivering under the thin motel blanket, reluctantly breathing the damp musty air. A constant wave of vibrations pulsed through her exhausted limbs and was echoed by the murmur of a television in the room behind her head. She breathed deeply in an effort to relax the tension in her neck. The television continued to murmur as she fell into a dream.

In her room, packing her things to move, Sandy was piling clothes into boxes. The boxes never seemed to fill up. She looked around and saw piles and piles of her belongings. Then the room became a warehouse, she searched for her belongings but they were gone. Huge crates stood all around her and were piled all the way to the ceiling high above her head. As the boxes began to close in around her, she tried to run to the other end of the warehouse. Her feet were somehow stuck to the floor. Like a giant wave the boxes began to fall toward her in slow motion, falling, falling.

Sandy jerked awake, a man's deep jarring voice penetrated the wall followed by a woman's jagged retorts. Sharp Spanish syllables sliced the air. Something crashed and was followed by what seemed to be a struggle, Sandy wasn't sure. She thought about getting the motel manager but quickly recalled how vacant his eyes had been, how he had dropped the key onto the floor not even looking at her outstretched hand.

The volume was rising in the next room. Through her ears and into the pit of her stomach the noises entered, uninvited. Sandy quickly pushed the covers away and went to the window. Through the greasy blinds she could see a large dark sedan parked next to her own rusty little car. The rest of the parking lot was empty. She listened, ears wide.

The chair by the window was very low and uncomfortably tilted. She leaned forward and held onto the arms for balance. A huge thud shook the wall causing her heart to beat madly. She tried to block the sound and turned into her mind in search of a quiet room. Every corridor was filled with unresolved faces. Her father's face brought a moment of reassurance but a groan from the next room transformed him into the monster she had known as a child.

Crouched in the corner of the kitchen, she had watched as her mother's body toppled down the stairs, followed by her father's bellowing footsteps. He had then picked her mother up and flung her against the radiator, her head was bleeding as she lay unconscious on the floor.

The violence of this image seemed worse than the faceless struggle in the next room which was now oddly quiet. Outside the window, there was nothing but black and miles of road that stretched out between Sandy and her brother in Santa Fe. She went to check the door, the button was pushed in. In the tiny bathroom she slowly unwrapped a glass. The water sputtered abruptly from the tap so she turned it to a thin, silent stream. Waiting for the water to get hot, she put the glass to the wall and listened. The sound of her own pulse filled the glass. For a long time there was no other sound. Then she thought she heard what might have been the low growl of a cat. She filled the glass with lukewarm water and carried it back to the chair.

Sandy waited in the granite silence, her body and mind feeling like styrofoam. She wondered if the woman was hurt. Her ex-boyfriend, Richard, pushed his way into her mind.

Richard had taken great pleasure in trapping her on the bed. His body twice the size of her own. He could hold her down with one arm and tickle her with the other until she thought she would suffocate. Then, as though nothing had happened, he would want to make love. She could not say no. Despite the rage that had filled her body, she felt compelled to make him believe that she had enjoyed their lovemaking.

She sat there bewildered by her own mind which so often seemed to be working against her. In the next room, someone was crying, or laughing. Sandy sipped the stale water, her stomach groaning with hunger. She saw her brother Bill and his wife Vida sitting in their safe warm kitchen. She wished she could just close her eyes and be there. All her worry about Bill's dislike for her vagabond lifestyle was now distant and unimportant. She would gratefully listen to his criticism at this moment rather than sit alone in her isolated motel room.

Like runaway boxcars, Sandy and the couple next door seemed destined to remain locked together, rolling without destination through the night. Through the window, Sandy searched the thin line of mountain range for the first sign of light.

Victoria Pearmain



Rubens's Portrait of Thomas Howard

This fearless captain
a commander of armies
poses with an attitude
of his royal majesty
forcing upon us
a sharp glare
over his shoulder
as though enemies
were near
Distance, between
his rank and of
the observer
clothed in ceremonial armor
he rests his hand
upon a staff
a plumed helmet
by his side, while
classical architecture
echoes his surrounds.

Melissa Spinosa



Diaries

Poem related to Mood of Levertov's Wedding Ring revised

My diaries lie burning off of Route One
In the Dedham Dump
As ripped and mixed-up
As the garbage it's dying with up up!
the stench rising up

A fitting gravestone to my adolescence

I'm afraid I'd read them again
Remembering mistakes
Though I've learned from them
Maybe someone could have kept the looseleaf covers
The papers for Origami folding
Or I could have left them to Nicole
A reminder that mothers are sinners too.

Jeanne Kent



Twyla

"Nigger woman!"

"What?"

"Nig-ga Wo-man!"

Twyla blinked. The word clanged in her ears. She could not imagine being called that, not even by Melanie, yet another black woman, her friend.

"I haven't seen anything so pitiful in my life! A nigger woman painting whitey pictures—hopin' to catch herself a whitey—even if his legs are all bashed up. Half a whitey is better than no whitey, rightey?"

Twyla found herself smiling to ward off further aggression. The smell of turpentine in the air grew nauseating. It warned, leave.

"Ain't got nothin' to say Honey?" Melanie cackled. Clapped her hands together, rubbing them. It did not matter if she never set foot in the same school as Twyla again. This moment would hang on like the odor of a public fart.

Twyla retreated to her corner of the room and began sorting through the mess, the fate of a whole semester's worth of work. Torn canvas and half-stripped stretcher bars threw off twisted shadows. The wind flapped through the ragged bits, making a rattling noise. She bent over them, recognizing even in their state, each one of them, interiors, self-portraits, landscapes and one of her lover, Jordan. They stung her like fresh cuts.

"You left this fucking mess in the space so I cleared it up."

Twyla looked down at the pieces. They were not out of mind though, piled against the white room divider, a totem of bones bleaching in the sunlight.

"This is not a mess," she replied and averted her blonde-processed head from the pile. Tears. Or maybe sunshine hurt her eyes.

"It is too," Melanie reiterated. "Just like your life."

Twyla never understood why Melanie changed so. She had been dumbfounded enough when this former friend destroyed her works before her eyes. She did not react then. She could not. Yet, Melanie did not recognize the hurt she felt, starting even now with fresh vehemence.

“Amazing! He manages on those crutches like a daddy longlegs with just two legs left. Maybe the wonderchild can paint the rest of your review for you. Dip them crutches in paint and roll them on canvas—call it Limited Facility type art.”

“Shu-u-ut up!” Twyla stammered. She clutched the slashed portrait of Jordan. His hazel eyes were disconnected, one curling in one direction, the other staring straight out.

“Don’t you worry if your child will have steel legs too? Or were you looking at his pretty, soft hair all in curls, and maybe you’d gotten tired of your year-round tan—you into something lighter?”

“Shut up!” Twyla snarled a second time. They had been best friends. Two young women with a common goal—getting an education. They banded together in the face of the WASP society—if they were excluded, they could exclude too. The pursuit of love they considered frivolous. It seemed one no longer believed that.

She pursed her lips, thinking. Jordan’s image, once-smiling, was no comfort. She tossed it into the trash. She *knew* what burned in Melanie’s brain. She could put a finger on it so clearly it scared her.

“You’re pretty insecure, aren’t you? Is it because you wanted him for those reasons or are you a lesbo hanging onto me because you can’t hang?” The words were awful. She did not like to think she could say them. But they had to come out. Self-defense. Yet doubt clawed at her.

“You hurt me Melanie.”

“Bitch,” came the retort.

Twyla wanted to cry. She did not. She had never insinuated that Jordan assumed anything she and Melanie shared. That relationship was too new. Now she was being driven straight into his arms. The proper authorities had been informed of the destruction Melanie caused. The Administration assured Twyla she would be disciplined, perhaps even expelled. Knowing this Twyla had all the reason in the world not to protest. She was the victim.

They looked into each other’s eyes a moment. “Bitch,” Melanie growled again. Twyla turned away. She continued to rearrange her section of the room. Rescued Jordan from the

trash, her heart was racing, yet she wanted to exit with some kind of calm declaration. She began to carry him out.

She noticed Melanie clearing out her own space. It might be that she had to leave. Twyla missed her right then. A steady friend might feel desperate in their situation and even act on that desperation in the way that blistered both of them inside.

"Go screw yourself," Melanie snapped the final time. Twyla moved then. Slunk down the hall and looked at the picture of Jordan again. She was tempted to drop it. To punish him through his image somehow. To have had him there, witnessing the entire incident, might not have helped any. Still she wondered about the possibility.

No. This was not his fight. He knew the crap they would have to face together for the rest of their lives. This was her problem. She looked back. There was something left to do.

Then came ripping, crashes, curses from the studio. She listened to the noise knowing it was Melanie turning upon her own creations and destroying them in the same mindless way she had earlier destroyed hers. Twyla continued to just listen. Mute. Impressed with the passion with which Melanie did these things, yet she did not feel vindicated. She felt again that it was all her fault.

Carla Johnson





To Christo

You wrapped the coast in plastic,
they laughed.
I saw a film of this site
specific piece
though scents of salted air were gone
the sounds it made
were of a ruffled sail
and the waves against the covered rocks
were a bullwhip in the wind
sucked away.
Now as frost winds rush us
and people cringe at the god of winter,
I remember the rippling coast you robed,
your textures of wind,
I am warm.

Brian Lane



Easterhouse, 14 stops on two different trains from the center of Glasgow.

in the rain:
drippy summer painted egg-shell flats stretching like taffy
snap of existence going on inside
a white Harlem.
a city outside the city.
ice cream van with Betty Boop lights
smears the distance.
Making the rounds.
Making sure the wee ones are sucking away,
happy.
The only bar is lively;
everyman knows everyman, and I know when I enter.
Darts puncture time. Yells across the floor:
"Where's she from? Why are you in Easterhouse? Alone?"
Incredulous, as I belch stout and ask their names.
Shouting over British rock, something about tea,
I follow the earnest one,
trusting. He walks as if prized and I have second thoughts.
One, two blocks,
identical crackerbox. (I've got nothin' . . . I've got nothin' too . . .)
Jim's family painting the existing room
and a neighbor turns the house upside down to help.
Papa fixes a batch of caulking on the cabinet top,
a batch of eggs and chips on the stove.
They watch me eat.
Mum, wall-of-mum, flattens her frame
on the bed around which everything is arranged,
for American soaps
wants to know what I watch.
She speaks to me.
Jim leans forward to translate
her toothlessness and Glaswegian.
She wants me to come closer
Mother Orobouros
she wants to swallow me as the men fold their arms, satisfied.
She thinks she's "Seen me face before."
"No, I've really got to" —get out now, back to the train.
Mum's nearly tumbling out of her nighty.
Jim's taking a chest of drawers off his bed.
I'm full and happy and backing out the door.

Katie Redmond



George Segal: The Holocaust

On a cold floor they lie
pressed together
sunken rib cages indignantly
aim to the sky
flattened and defenseless
reaching for a breath of air
as a faceless survivor looks
through the barbed wire
we marvel at his strength
he stands silently
trying to remember if he said goodbye
a remnant who will share his grief
with anyone willing to listen

Linda Roffman

Haiku

No one spoke
shadows comfort one another
neon signs invade my room.

Lynn Packish





Unique Forms of Continuity in Space

Inspired by the sculpture by Boccioni

Swift beast of movement
Halted in twilight
One fluid motion
Caught in frozen liquid steps.

Your muscles sprout
Silent wings of a bird
That slap like flags
On masts,
Stretch to their farthest reach.

Your feet,
Prisoners of cement boots
Still attempt to fly.

For longer than an instant
I can touch agility
And graceful paths through gravity.

I caress steel solid limbs
That support the weight
Of an urgent messenger of purpose
Who will never reach his destination.

Laya Steinberg



Untitled

When it rains
I have the urge to put my sneakers on
And run outside
 Without an umbrella
I love to feel my hair gradually flatten
And drip down my face
And to leap into puddles
Until my shoes are soaked through
So that
When I step into the house
I have the sensation of
 stepping on wet sponges.
I love draggin my wetness inside
Spoiling everyone's warmth and security
By leaving large puddles on the floor.

Jane Janorsky



Static

Jim's fingers danced nimbly as they performed the task of tying his shoelaces. His body shuddered involuntarily at the thought of what this day may have in store for him. "Good Lord," he thought, "the real world." No longer would he be safe in the womb of the School of Art. His hands continued at their job as he thought. Their actions done so unconsciously he had forgotten all about them. The thought of his portfolio being rejected made him shudder again. Art directors stared down at him from their god-like vantage points. Fingers pointed towards an empty corridor. He knew where that corridor led. Nowhere.

He grabbed his coat off of the couch and swung it over his shoulder. His hand turned the doorknob and had the door part way open when the phone began to ring. He turned to look at it, glancing quickly at his watch. Just let it ring, he told himself, you're running late already. He stepped outside, but it was no use. He had to answer it. He grabbed the phone and brought it to his ear. "Hello," he said hastily. No answer. "Hello?" No answer again. The veins in his temples began to pulse with his growing impatience. "Listen," he said angrily, "I don't have time to — . . ."

"Oh, I think you should find the time to talk to me, Jim." A voice said suddenly. Somehow this voice sounded familiar to him.

"Who is this?" He could feel his blood pressure rising.

"A friend." The voice told him.

"What do you want?" He said through gritted teeth. Something about this voice.

"It's not what I want, Jim. But what you want," the voice said softly. "You would like to be forgiven. I have it in my heart to forgive you. Your salvation can only be found within this way. But the first step is to forgive yourself."

Familiar. The voice sounded familiar. It sounded almost like . . .

"Dad?" he whispered. His breath began to come in ragged gasps. His chest muscles tightened.

In his dreams, his father was alive. Telling him everything was alright. Acting as though nothing was wrong. But something was definitely wrong.

The voice on the other end was silent. "Please. Tell me who you are," he pleaded.

He knew it was impossible for him to be alive again. He remembered the long months of suffering when his father was dying. Cancer slowly rotted his insides.

This was too much like his dreams.

"Your mother asked me to call," the voice answered. "She asked me to let you know that everything is going to be alright."

It was as if he were welded to the spot. He simply could not move. All he could do was stand there listening into the phone with his mouth hanging open. My father, his tortured mind thought, is calling me 'from beyond,' to tell me everything is going to be alright. Suddenly his head didn't seem big enough to hold back the brains that wanted to leak out of his ears onto the floor. "Oh God! Please!" he screamed. "Tell me who you are!"

Line static talked back to him from the other end.

"Tell me!" he moaned.

"You will be forgiven, son," the voice finally answered. "A donation of two hundred dollars to the church of your choice and you will be forgiven forever."

"What?" his eyes narrowed. A hot flush steamed his face. "What do you mean, a donation?"

"A donation to help—"

"Are you telling me that to be forgiven in God's eyes, I have to donate two hundred dollars to the church? You have to be fucking kidding." He slammed down the receiver into its cradle. His flush remained embarrassed that he had mistaken that sorry excuse of a person for his father.

He looked at his watch. First interview: gone. As he opened the door on the way to the second interview, he told himself to remember to give his mother a call and have a long talk with her.

Jonathan Banchick



M.M.

just another precious face on the gallery wall
captured beneath glass
with a smile that was never so happy
your colors are bright
hidden by hues that only mask.

Brenda Brenner

Celebration

Marzipan Potatoes
Peter Rabbit came too
Jessica primping her pinafore

up in a blaze your gaze
salutations of days
when you're two

Joe Daniels





Hair

from tossing in sleep, knotting
impatiently i sat,
mother pulled them out
winching, squirming
tears rolled lazily down
i used an arm to wipe them away.
two pigtails
silky ropes of honey
satin ribbons, i'd ironed
tied around each end
brushing, combing
arms grow weary,
over shoulders draped
like a mink on aunt lucy
pulling up-high
only to fall
up-til perfectly placed
swishing, tossing
a wobbly legged colt
the day came
i did like my friends
taming tresses, we ironed
flattened and straightened
not wanting to singe
we got the heat right
i let go, burnishing, wild
feeling free
suddenly darkness fell
crying voices calling me
my mane, strong insulation
from the explosion before me.

Frances Francis



Untitled

From the basket
that holds the bread
beside the toaster
I pulled each roommate's loaf
and found fifteen plastic gems,
bag closures, color coded
and archeologically dated
by the manufacturer
for my breakfast mardi gras.

Lynne Wallace



Autobiographical Poem

I am the caretaker.
Their pain lies
fragmented
in attic boxes,
labyrinths,
the mice plead
to know which way is out
echoes
through the void
within me
I am only twelve,
and I am the caretaker.

Tanya Allen



Changes

"Ronald, is that you?" Marie asked as she gripped her lower abdomen. The large pad around her groin felt foreign through the blue pajamas.

"Ronald?" Even after several hours of sleep her bedroom still seemed to be spinning. Why had she agreed to the general anesthesia? Because it was better than a local where you watch masked faces descend with instruments to scrape your uterus. What if you heard the word, cancer? No. Oblivion was preferable and the doctor said it would be brief. Except now she wondered if her sixteen year old could hear her calling? All she wanted was a little gingerale, some saltines, a Mom-how-are-you-feeling? Of course, he'd want to stay with her tonight in case she hemorrhaged.

"Crash!" What in the world was he doing? He'd better not have been drinking again.

"Ronald!" Maybe her voice was weaker than she imagined.

"Yeh. What is it?" Ronald leaned against the threshold, a long blond curl clinging to his damp forehead.

"What is it? You know what IS IT. I had the D and C this morning in case you've forgotten. I've been waiting for you to come home from school to help me. Instead, you stumble in knocking down who knows what and with the smell of beer on you."

"I only had a couple with the guys. It was only the dime store vase. I'll pick it up later."

"Forget the vase. I wish you wouldn't drink." A pain on the right side of her head began to throb.

"Ya. Ya. I've heard this all before."

"Please don't talk to me like that. I don't have the strength to argue with you." She remembered from her psychology class that some people drink when they're frightened. Best to drop the subject for now. "Look. I need you to stay with me tonight in case I hemorrhage and need an ambulance. In the meantime you could get me a snack. I know it's Friday and all."

"Where's your friend Edith? She picked you up from the hospital didn't she?"

"She has a family and problems of her own."

"What about Dad?"

"What about him? Who knows when he'll be home and in what condition. He didn't want to drive me to the hospital or pick me up. What makes you think he'll stay with me tonight? Friday is his card night at the club. Why am I telling you all this? You know how it is between us. I thought my youngest son would want to stay home to help me."

"Well, you figured wrong. I've got a date."

Marie listened in disbelief. "Can't you break it? I'm your mother. I'm sick. I need your help."

"You're always sick. You're always complaining."

"Don't you . . . love me?" The tears spilled down her face.

"What are you crying for now?"

"You didn't answer me. Do you love me?"

Ronald shrugged his shoulders.

"What's this?" Romeo pushed past his son and stood near Marie's pink bed. "I could hear you from the front door. Are you two having an argument again about his drinking? So what if he has a couple?"

"So what? So what? He's only sixteen. What if he . . . he . . .?"

"Go ahead. Say it. What if he turns out like his old man?"

"I have a right to tell him not to drink! I'm his mother."

"And I'm the man around here and I'll say what goes on in my own damn house. And when I come home and overhear you two arguing over something so trivial as a couple of beers . . . Well, I don't want to hear any arguing. It's bad enough that I can't go to the club tonight 'cuz I've got to work tomorrow. I need my rest. I can't be up all hours over a couple of damn beers. Come on man, let's leave her alone. She doesn't understand men and their needs."

Before Marie could answer they left the room. She dragged herself out of bed, locked her door and lay face down on the bed. She sobbed until there was nothing left in her.

She remembered feeling like this once before when she discovered "Roe's" lover, Louise. How the night at the ocean had helped her. Nature always soothed her. Maybe if she looked out at the backyard? She stumbled over to the window, pulled up the green shade and looked out at the garden she and her father had cultivated. It seemed a lifetime ago. Now he and Mom were gone. If only she could be with them asleep under the earth she loved.

She could call Edith. But Edith would tell her that she should leave "Roe" just as other friends had advised. No woman in this twentieth century would stay with such a man, a man who drank and had a mistress. They may have been Catholics but not so devout as she.

She had slept in her own bedroom for months now. She had slimmed down in hopes of regaining "Roe's" love. Her studies at Merrimac College were going well. She had made new friends. She could have gone on in the same house with "Roe" but not when he had succeeded in stealing the affections of her son and undermining her authority. Maybe a separation was the only answer. Roe could keep Ronald. Let them both drown in their alcohol! Neither had asked how she was. This was the last straw.

Rest. The doctor said she must have rest. Tomorrow would be another day. Edith promised to call. Maybe she would come over. Maybe she couldn't. Regardless, she would ask "Roe" for a separation in the morning.

Marie walked over to the bed, pulled the down quilt over her and fell asleep. It had been a long, long time since she had slept so well.

Jeanne Kent



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